

On Decision of Character.

conquest are the joys of man." What need I care for people's opinion? It shall be done.—He makes the first attempt. But some unexpected obstacle presents itself; he feels the awkwardness of attempting an unaccustomed manner of acting; the questions or the ridicule of his friends disconcert him; his ardour abates and expires. He again begins to question whether it be wise, whether it be necessary, whether it be possible; and at last surrenders his purpose to be perhaps resumed when the same feelings return, and to be in the same manner again relinquished.

While animated by some magnanimous sentiments which he has heard or read, or while musing on some great example, a man may conceive the design, and partly sketch the plan, of a generous enterprise; and his imagination revels in the felicity to others and himself, that would follow from its accomplishment. The splendid representation always centres in himself as the hero who is to realize it.

In a moment of remitted excitement, a faint whisper from within may doubtfully ask, Is this more than a dream; or am I really destined to achieve such an enterprise? Destined!—and why are not this conviction of its excellence, this conscious duty of performing the noblest things that are possible, and this passionate ardour enough to constitute a destiny?—He feels indignant that there should be a failing part of his nature to defraud a nobler, and cast him below the ideal model and the actual examples which he is admiring; and this feeling assists him to resolve, that he will undertake this enterprise, that he certainly will, though the Alps or the Ocean lie between him and the object. Again, his ardour slackens; distrustful of Himself, he wishes to know how the design would appear to other minds; and when he speaks of it to his associates, one of them wonders, another laughs, and another frowns. His pride, while with them, attempts a manful defence; but his resolution gradually crumbles down toward their level; he becomes in a little while ashamed to entertain a visionary project, which therefore, like a rejected friend, desists from intruding on him or following him, except at lingering distance; and he subsides, at last, into what he labours to believe a man too rational for the schemes of ill-calculating enthusiasm. And it were strange if the effort to make out this favourable estimate of himself did not

succeed, while it is so much